



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

May 24, 2021

Dear President Biden and members of the United States Congress,

While we welcome and celebrate the fragile ceasefire in Palestine and Israel, we are urging members of Congress and the President of the United States to end military aid and weapons sales to Israel, and to support HR 2590.

Throughout the 11-day conflict, 12 Israeli civilians, including 2 children, were killed in the fighting, and [248 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including 66 children](#). This is [a continuation of a decades-long policy](#) of occupation, oppression, and expropriation land and resources from the Palestinian people, as the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem documented in their January 2021 report, "This is Apartheid."

The Israeli government took a series of actions that led to the current conflict: First, the ongoing [evictions of Palestinian families](#) from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and elsewhere in East Jerusalem. As 25 U.S. representatives including Congressmember Pramila Jayapal noted to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken on May 12, the Biden administration should "immediately send the strongest possible diplomatic message to Israel to desist from its plans to demolish Palestinian homes in Al-Bustan and evict Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah." Second, the Israeli government's [armed assault on Muslim worshippers](#) at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque. And third, the [organized violence against the Palestinians](#) by the Israeli government and by settlers.

The latest military assault came on top of the ongoing Palestinian struggle to survive under conditions of the pandemic, poverty, mass unemployment and misery, and of the [intensified Israeli occupation as documented by Human Rights Watch](#), including extensive demolition of Palestinian houses; military and police brutality; settlers violently preventing Palestinians access to their farmland; and [in the case of Gaza, a brutal blockade of nearly 14 years](#). The conditions in Gaza even before the present assault were [described by the United Nations as "unlivable"](#).

As the organization [Jewish Voice for Peace](#) has correctly pointed out, "The violence between Israelis and Palestinians is often falsely presented as a conflict between two equal sides with irreconcilable claims to one piece of land. In reality, this is a conflict over territory between a nation-state, Israel, with one of the world's most powerful and well-funded militaries, and an indigenous population of Palestinians that has been occupied, displaced, and exiled for decades."

Sectarian violence has erupted on the streets in Israel, the worst since 2000. [Mobs](#) were openly and directly organized by [far-right-wing Kahanist elements](#) against Arab-Palestinian



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communities, with police in some cases failing to intervene to stop this organized racist violence.

The interim Israeli government rejected all attempts to reach a ceasefire until the global pressure became untenable. The regime cynically portrays its actions as being done in defense of civilians, even though it bears the overwhelming responsibility for the escalation of conflict.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pointed to [statements by the Biden administration](#) to maintain that his government acted with the consent of the US. The Biden administration still has not condemned the bombings in Gaza, which have wiped out families and brought down whole buildings, including the bombing of press offices of the Associated Press, Aljazeera and other outlets, as well as damage to at least 18 hospitals and health clinics.

We applaud Rep. Jayapal's leadership and co-sponsorship of HR 2590. [Jayapal importantly cited](#) "the continuing annexation that Israel has been undertaking for years." We urge members of Congress to support HR 2590 and, as Jayapal did, sign on to the Resolution of Disapproval by Ocasio-Cortez, also introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Bernie Sanders, to stop the \$735 million weapons sale to the Israeli state.

To be clear: Palestinians should have a right to protest, and to organize and to defend themselves. Absolutely, we oppose indiscriminate firing of rockets against civilians in Israel. As [Congressmember Rashida Tlaib](#) said, "No child, Palestinian or Israeli, whoever they are, should ever have to worry that death will rain from the sky." We agree with [Congressmember Ocasio-Cortez](#) when she said: "The President has said that Israel has a right to defend itself. But do Palestinians have a right to survive? The U.S. must acknowledge its role in the human rights violations of Palestinians. This isn't about both sides. It's about an imbalance of power."

Palestinian people and Jewish Israelis and immigrants were killed by rockets, including children. However, we condemn the attempt by the Israeli government to use Israeli deaths as justification for the immeasurably more devastating bombings and military attacks they have wrought on countless defenseless Palestinian civilians. We applaud Congressmembers Jayapal, Ocasio-Cortez, Tlaib, Pressley, Omar and many others who have spoken out against the attacks.

The continued occupation and repression of the Palestinian people has been [funded and facilitated by the United States government](#). It has been part of a long-term policy of U.S. governments to support apartheid against the Palestinian people. Successive U.S. administrations have attempted to portray themselves as honest brokers of peace, but have in fact blocked peace both diplomatically and by providing active military aid to the Israeli government.



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The ceasefire comes after protests in the United States and globally. Four thousand people protested outside the Israeli consulate in Los Angeles on May 15. On May 16, thousands of people protested here in Seattle and in San Francisco. Labor unions in the US, including the [United Electrical Workers](#), and here in Seattle, [UAW 4121](#), the union of academic student employees and postdocs at the University of Washington, have publicly condemned the Israeli attacks, joining [UNITE HERE Local 23](#), the [NewsGuild/CWA](#), the 800,000-member [Irish Congress of Trade Unions](#), the 1.3 million member [UNISON union](#), the 5.8 million member [Trades Union Congress](#) of the United Kingdom, the [Canadian Labour Congress](#), [Unifor](#), the largest private-sector union in Canada, and organizations from around the world in standing with the Palestinian people.

We call on you to urgently condemn the brutal attacks on Gaza. Most importantly, we call on you to end all military aid and all weapons sales to Israel, stop providing diplomatic cover for these policies of the Israeli state, and please pass HR 2590.

Sincerely,

Council President Pro Tem Lisa Herbold

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda

Councilmember Kshama Sawant